



ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

FOR

THE YEAR, 1910.

FOR THE

URBAN SANITARY DISTRICT

OF

DOWNHAM MARKET.



POPULATION (CENSUS 1901) 2,473.

DOWNHAM MARKET :

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ANNUAL REPORT

For the Year 1910,

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,

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THE URBAN DISTRICT OF DOWNHAM MARKET.

Population (Census 1901) 2473.

Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in submitting to you my Annual Report for 1910.

It is necessary from year to year to repeat certain physical and geographical data for the information of those authorities concerned who may be unacquainted with local conditions.

The area of the district is 1,002 acres, compact in form and not requiring sub-division into "localities" for statistical purposes. 1d. rate produces about £35.

The district is situated on the eastern border of the great fen level, the surface falls gradually towards the western boundary of the district, formed by the St. John's Eau. This river is an artificial cut constructed for the purpose of assisting to carry off upland waters into the Ouse, and the powers over it appear to be vested in the Bedford Level Corporation. The subsoils are chiefly sandstone in the upper portion of the district, and clay in the lower.

Population.

This I estimate to be about 2,500, it probably varies as little as in any district, but accurate figures will be forthcoming next year.

The occupations of the inhabitants are mainly those of the usual Market Town, commercial and agricultural; there are no large factories or industries which have much bearing on the public health, and there is no unusual amount of poverty.

House Accommodation.

There are from 650 to 660 inhabited houses, and the amount of house accommodation is generally sufficient for the district. There are several cottages, particularly some in Priory road, where defects have been found and I have in all cases approached the owners or their agents with a view to sanitary improvement. It is of course useless to expect very poor tenants to undertake even indoor repairs, and in one or two instances owners themselves complain of financial inability to do anything. I find that defects of ventilation and cleanliness are more often due to ignorance and carelessness on the part of tenants than to faulty construction. A want of a suitable storage place for food is the most important defect found and could be remedied by the provision of a large outdoor safe, well protected from wet and flies, and well ventilated. Where dampness has been found it is almost invariably due to defective spouting and guttering.

On the whole the housing of the working classes is better than it was several years ago, and no house in the district has been condemned as unfit for habitation during the year. With the increased amount of inspection which will take place under the "Housing and Town Planning Act" doubtless sundry defects will come to light, and I hope to secure from house owners the same co-operation in the future as they have in most instances accorded in the past. The water supply should now be an easier matter to deal with if we can secure an extension of the mains, this matter will be discussed under another heading. Three cases of overcrowding have been dealt with during the year.

The amount of general sickness during 1910 has been fortunately small, except for a few mild cases of Scarlet Fever and Measles at the end of the year the district has been free from epidemics. It has not been necessary to close the schools at any time, the teachers do good work in promptly reporting any suspicious cases of infectious disease, and exclusions from school are arranged in cooperation with the School Medical Officer, who has given invaluable advice in this connection as also on general matters during the year, in his capacity of County M. O. H. In July in consequence of a fatal case of infantile Diarrhœa, my attention was called to sanitary defects in a row of cottages in Priory road. I interviewed the owner, who expressed herself willing to carry out the most necessary improvements, but the question of most importance in the whole of this road is the water supply. During the year I have made systematic inspections of such localities as seemed to require it.

Birth Rate.

There were 53 births registered, as compared with 47 the previous year. Five of these were illegitimate, the birth-rate is thus 21·2 per 1000 population, this corresponds with the average for the last ten years.

Death Rate.

It is satisfactory to record that only 29 deaths were registered, as against 55 the previous year. Of course in a small population great variation in annual figures is to be expected and has no particular relation to public health. The death rate is thus 11·6 per 1000 for the year, the lowest on record, and this includes four non-residents who died in the Workhouse, the death rate corrected for residents is only 10 per 1000 population.

Infant Mortality.

Only one death under one year of age, this occurred at four days from premature birth. Rate 18·8 per 1000 births registered.

The absence of any spell of hot weather during the summer may have partly accounted for this low mortality; hot weather with its attendant flies decomposing food and diarrhoea accounting for much infantile disease.

The Notification of Births Acts is not adopted, nor is this district large or populous enough to require it.

During the early part of the year your Council allowed me to provide cards of instruction as to the feeding and care of infants, these are given out on the registration of births in the district and supply in many cases much needed information. I am indebted to the Sub-Registrar, Mr. E. A. Walker, for their distribution. I am confident this is a step in the right direction and will certainly tend to lessen the amount of infantile disease caused by ignorance.

Infectious Diseases.

The only notifiable disease occurring during the year has been Scarlet Fever, of which 12 cases were notified. Seven of these occurred in one small epidemic in November, all were of a very mild type, more resembling the so-called "Fourth Disease" than well defined Scarlet Fever, and in only two of the cases could I detect any subsequent desquamation; precautions as to isolation and disinfection were taken under the direction of the Sanitary Inspector, and all contacts were kept under observation. There is no Isolation Hospital available in the district. Disinfection is carried out by means of a large Formaldehyde lamp, and baking or boiling suitable articles and clothing.

Refuse Disposal.

This work has continued to give satisfaction, the collector goes round with cart three mornings a week and thus much objectionable deposit in ash pits is prevented.

Phthisis and Tubercular Disease.

The amount is not large at the present time in this district, one death only was registered from this disease. One

notification of Phthisis was received, that of a case in the Workhouse Infirmary. There is no system of voluntary notification.

The chief causes of death in 1910, were—

Bronchitis	....	....	5
Senile Decay	....	....	5
Heart Disease	....	....	4
Cerebral Hæmorrhage			3
Pneumonia	....	....	2
Cancer....	....	....	2

Of the 29 deaths registered only 12 occurred under 70 years of age.

Water Supply.

That from the four public wells has been sufficient and of good quality. There are at present only 77 houses supplied with the Marham water, an extension along High street to Denver road and down Priory road is much needed. In Priory road the present supply is most unsatisfactory, entirely from surface wells, all liable to pollution, and several already polluted and not used for drinking water, I tested samples from all these wells during the summer. One pump, at present giving good water, is supplying as many as fourteen houses and some of the tenants have to go a considerable distance and on to neighbours "territory" for water, this causes much inconvenience and sometimes strife. This popular pump I found out of gear, and the users in the habit of pouring any sort of water into it to start working, it was at once put in order by the owner at my requisition. I would ask your Council to consider what steps can be taken to extend the benefits of the Marham water to Priory road and up the Denver road, I am sure much benefit would accrue from an extension. We have already seen what advantage arises from the installation of the hydrants in case of fire, but a considerable portion of the town is unprovided in this respect. All surface wells are an uncertain and unsafe water supply

for drinking purposes. I would like to see a standpipe from the main put up for every block of houses in Priory road, so as to ensure at least safe drinking water even if a separate supply to each house is impracticable

Sewage Disposal.

The arrangements and conditions of the town sewerage remain exactly as heretofore, though much work has been done by your Council and officials in scheming for improvement. The existing arrangement of sewers and disposal (viz. untreated into St. John's Eau) has given rise to no particular difficulty, nuisance or illness that I am aware of during the past year, it is their potential power to do so that we have to beware of. It is obvious that any random system of open sewers, or open ditches casually conveying the sewage, accessible to both children and cows in some portion of their length, and liable to cause nuisance from smells to neighbouring houses and footpaths, are a constant source of possible danger, and a source which tends to increase as the water carriage system of house drainage becomes more general, as it is doing with our improved water supply. We must also forcibly bear in mind that if any serious epidemic occurred clearly traceable to our open sewer system and pollution of water caused thereby, it is upon the Sanitary Authority that a grave responsibility rests. Far from wishing to see this district saddled with an elaborate and expensive sewage scheme, I am only anxious to see the Sanitary Authority (your Council) safe as regards this responsibility; and the simplest method by which this can be effectually done is the one we must all hope to see arrived at. From a sanitary point of view the simple method of piping the open sewers in such portions as they are accessible or dangerous would satisfy me and was the method by which I proposed to overcome our original difficulties some years ago, but now we are faced with another and much larger question; our sewage has for generations found its way into St. John's Eau by two outlets, the amount has increased and now we are requested by those

in authority over that stream to prevent this pollution, and thus in having to arrange for the collection and purification of the sewage the great difficulty and expense arises. Messrs. Elliott & Brown. of Nottingham, the engineers concerned prepared a second scheme to effect this, which was the subject of a Local Government Board Inquiry on October 6th, the matter is still sub-judice, but to those present the difficulties both legal and otherwise appear considerable. There is little doubt that further discussion and conference with various authorities concerned is needed before a satisfactory solution can be found.

The Schools.

A full report on their condition was included in my Annual Report two years ago. Lighting and ventilation are still capable of improvement, otherwise the sanitary conditions are excellent, and the health of the school children generally has been good throughout the year. Cases of infectious disease are reported to the School Medical Officer, Dr. Nash, of Norwich, and medical inspection is carried out under his arrangement.

Milk Supply.

This has given no cause for anxiety during the year, no milk is imported into the district from outside. There are six registered Dairies and Cowsheds which have been periodically inspected. The bye laws in force were adopted in 1899, framed upon the model bye laws drafted by the L. G. B. and deal adequately with cleansing, ventilation, drainage, lighting, etc. and have been observed. No action has been taken for the Veterinary Inspection or detection of tuberculous cows.

There are nine Slaughter Houses which have been periodically visited by the Inspector. No action has been taken or needed under the Sale of Food and Drugs Act, and no carcasses condemned. The Sanitary Inspector has had special instruction in meat inspection, and has made frequent inspections of meat exposed for sale, none has been condemned

during the year. Part III of Public Health Act Amendment Act, 1907 has not been adopted. The number of closets now connected with the sewers is 526, only a few privy vaults remaining and these are gradually being done away with.

Factory and Workshops Act.

31 Factories and Workshops on the list have been inspected. There are no large factories in the district, most of the registered workshops employing only one or two persons. No action has been required under this Act. Eleven Bake Offices (none underground) and the homes of 14 Out Workers, these latter all employed in making and repairing clothing, have been visited. The Statistical Form has been forwarded to the Home Office as required.

The usual Statistical Tables are appended.

Vital Statistics of the whole District during 1910 and previous years.

Year.	Population estimated to the middle of each year.	Births.		Total deaths registered in the District.				Total Deaths in Public Institutions of the District (Workhouse)	Deaths of non-residents registered in public in- stitutions in the district	Deaths of residents regis- tered in public institu- tions beyond the district	Nett deaths at all ages belonging to the district	
		Number.	Rate.	under 1 year.		At all ages.						
				Number	Rate per 1000 Births registered.	Number	Rate					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Nmbr. 12	Rate 13
1900	2670	53	19·10	9	169	48	17·9	13	10	...	38	14·2
1901	2472	44	17	4	100	43	17·3	8	5	...	38	15·3
1902	2473	61	24·6	5	81	60	24·2	15	12	...	48	19·4
1903	2486	57	22·9	4	70	44	17·6	17	16	...	28	11·2
1904	2488	50	20·09	9	180	63	25·3	20	15	...	48	19·2
1905	2500	56	22·4	4	71	40	16	18	16	...	24	9·6
1906	2500	52	20·8	9	173	49	19·6	19	17	1	33	13·2
1907	2500	57	22·8	9	158	66	26·4	25	21	1	46	18·4
1908	2500	58	23·2	7	120	47	18·8	12	10	...	37	14·8
1909	2500	47	18·8	5	106	55	22	15	13	...	42	16·8
Averages for years 1900- 1909	2508	53·5	22	6·5	122·7	51·5	20·4	16·2	13·5	·2	42	15·1
1910	2500	53	21·2	1	18·8	29	11·6	7	4	...	25	10

Cases of Infectious Disease notified during the year 1910

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE.	CASES NOTIFIED IN WHOLE DISTRICT.						
	At all Ages.	At Ages—Years.					
		Under 1	1 to 5	5 to 15	15 to 25	25 to 65	65 and upwards
Small pox...
Cholera
Diphtheria, including Membraneous croup...
Erysipelas
Scarlet fever	12	...	4	7	1	...	...
Typhus Fever
Enteric fever
Relapsing fever
Continued fever
Puerperal fever
Plague
Totals	12	...	4	7	1	...	...

Causes of, and Ages at, Death during year 1910.

CAUSES OF DEATH. 1	Deaths at the subjoined ages of "Residents" whether occurring in or beyond the district.							Total Deaths whether of residents or non- residents in public institu- tions in the District.
	All Ages 2	Under 1 year 3	1 and under 5 4	5 and under 15 5	15 and under 25 6	25 and under 65 7	65 and upwards 8	
Diarrhœa	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...
Phthisis, Pulmonary Tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other tuberculous diseases ...	1	...	...	...	1	...	...	...
Canser, malignant disease ...	2	...	...	...	...	1	1	...
Bronchitis... ..	5	...	...	...	...	...	5	...
Pneumonia	2	...	...	...	...	1	1	...
Alcoholism, Cirrhosis of liver ...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Premature birth	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...
Heart diseases	4	...	...	...	...	1	3	...
Senile decay	2	...	...	...	...	...	2	5
Cerebral Hæmorrhage	3	...	...	...	...	...	3	1
All other causes	4	...	...	...	1	1	2	...
ALL CAUSES	25	1	1	...	2	4	17	7

The following items are taken from the records of the Sanitary Inspector, Mr. Geo. Rayner, to whose vigilance and knowledge of practical sanitation I am much indebted.

Defective drains remedied—24
 Defective closet traps remedied—9
 Supervision of complete new sets of drains—8
 Ash pits emptied—13
 Stable manure removed—13
 Dirty houses cleansed—4
 New traps—9
 Inspection chambers—7
 Cases of pigs within the prescribed distance—3
 New closets—23
 Closet vaults emptied—14
 Cases of unlicensed slaughter houses—2
 Disinfection of private houses—8. &c., &c.

It would, I feel sure, conduce to convenience and smooth working, now that the duties of my office are increasing, if your Council would appoint a Standing Committee to whom I could apply for authority and assistance when such are required and who could be called together with less inconvenience than a whole Council if cause should arise needing prompt action and expenditure of money, for example, an outbreak of small pox or diphtheria.

It only remains for me to thank the members of your Council for their courtesy and help during the past year.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours obediently,

EDWARD G. WALES, M.A., M.B.,

Medical Officer of Health.